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King of the Ghosts

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KING OF THE GHOSTS

KAT ELLIOTT

He's standing on a street corner, leaning against the wall of the local gas station—cigarette in hand, sunglasses concealing his eyes, smoke wreathes his dark head like a crown, drifting upwards in wisps.

And he's talking to shadows.

He's roaring down the street in an old black Camaro, blasting the Rolling Stones and Blue Öyster Cult, a killer smile in place and an ego so large it's like a neon sign.

And he takes something from the people he passes, sparks of light that leave them nothing but shades.

He's the executioner. He's the reaper. A thief of life.

You hate him. You fear him.

And when he finally pulls up alongside you, you

are determined to fight.

The window rolls down and he extends one arm, a beaten up pack of Marlboros clasped in his fingers. He leans out and smiles, offering you one. And you shake your head no, keep walking, eyes fixed on the pavement.

But the gravel crunches under the wheels of the Camaro as he keeps pace with you.

When you turn to glare, eyes narrowed and baring teeth, he pushed his sunglasses up, onto his head. What you see stops you dead. The dark circles under his pale gray eyes, the hollowed cheekbones you notice for the first time. Shoulders slumped with exhaustion.

"Purgatory ain't shit, kid," he says. "Ghosts like you need to move on."

And you stare, at the murky gray of his eyes, at the

street you are walking. All the colors have been leached from the buildings, the sky, the people who wander the street, as lost as you.

There are no sensations. There's nothing here.

It's just a semblance of the life before.

Your eyes move back to him.

He asks, in a quiet but firm tone, "Do you need a lift?" You nod your head and hop into the passenger seat.

He's the king of the ghosts. He's the savior of lost souls.

You love him.

And the two of you take off, "Sympathy for the Devil" blasting from the Camaro's speakers as you ride into oblivion.